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/Information on Nayar "snake cults" has been filed in the following categories: snake shrines and temples--778; snakes as deities--776; general beliefs about snakes--825; the "snake cult" as a part of the general religious order of the Nayars--771; ceremonial practices associated with the "cult"--798./

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683
the Nâyar would be cut down instantly with a sword: 564
there would be no words. Now that the people of India 783
are inconvenienced with an Arms Act which inhibits [656]
sword play of this kind, and with a law-system under [178]
which high and low are rated alike, the Nâyar has to [201]
content himself with an imperious grunt-like shout for
the way to be cleared for him as he stalks on unperturbed.
His arrogance is not diminished, but he cannot now show
it in quite the same way.

Doubtless the natural habit of seclusion common to 771
Malabar, rendered easy by the wealth of vegetation of
which those who have never visited shores somewhat
alike climatically can have no conception, has favoured
the persistence of earlier forms of belief; but, whatever
may be the reason for it, there is much more of the
extremes of religious belief to be seen amongst the
Nâyars than amongst any other people or caste of
Southern India.

It has been noticed already how that the Malayalis [795]
have, practically, no sects such as obtain throughout the
rest of Southern India. Vishnu, Siva, Bhagavati, Rama—
all these names of the Hindu theogony are meaningless
to them. They do not know one from the other except in
name. Their Hinduism is not that of the rest of South-
ern India.

It is time to come to concrete example, so I will 796
attempt a description of the ceremonial observed at the [773]
Pishâri kâvu—the Pishâri temple near Quilandy on the
coast 15 miles north of Calicut, where Bhagavati is sup-
posed in vague legend to have slain an Asura or
gigantic ogre, in commemoration of which event the
festival is held yearly to Bhagavati and her followers.
It is fairly representative. The deity of the temple [776]
Bhagavati is spoken of as feminine in the spirit of accu-
racy, but it is extremely unlikely whether ten per cent.
of the crowd even thought of sex in connection with
Bhagavati. Sacrifice of goats as part of the ceremonial [782]
was at first denied: it is a mystery too awful to be the
subject of conversation. At the same time, I am inclined
to think that much the weighter reason is that the priests
who cling to this part of the ceremonial are ashamed to
let it be known to the people that they do it. They like
it to be thought that such sacrifice is appropriate to the
inferior races, but that *they* are above it and have nothing
to do with it!

The festival lasts for seven days. When I visited it
in 1895 the last day was on the 31st of March. Before

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bringing them up as their own. The belief that they will steal children helps to some extent to make them dreaded as well as abhorred, but it is as skilled professors of black magic that they are really feared. Ôḍi is the name of the cult, and those who follow it, Parayans as a rule, are able to do many wonderful things. The ordeals to be gone through by the apprentice in the Ôḍi cult are rather trying. Some are so utterly filthy and abominable, eating human excreta being a detail, that even amongst the Parayans, themselves dirty to a degree and accustomed to anything but a high class diet, very few are able to undergo them. Many try, and are unable to proceed. But the man who has gone through them all is a terror. He can make himself invisible, and he can turn himself at will into any animal in order to accomplish his desires. There occurs now and then the death of a woman—a Nâyar or other—enceinte for the first time, the fœtus having been removed for use in black magic.*

The Parayan magician, or Ôḍiyan as he is sometimes called, being a pastmaster in Ôḍi, is credited with power to render himself invisible, using such a fœtus; and even without it, he may force a woman to leave her house at midnight and meet him. There would seem to be some connection, however obscure, with hypnotism and this latter. The Parayan, who turns himself into a bullock, in such guise, circumambulates a house thrice; then, still by means of magic, he compels a certain woman of the household to come out to him. If we follow up popular belief, we find that the Nâyar woman so drawn out of her house is bound to die within three days. But as it is well in a description of this kind, to proceed by illustration when possible, I will quote an authenticated story of a woman having been compelled to leave her house by night. The "walking the dæsil" by the bullock, one of those imaginative performances difficult to account for in human belief, must be left out of the story as no one is said to have seen it.

A Nâyar noticed that, for some days, his wife, who was (contrary to the usual custom, as we have seen it to be) living in his house, appeared to be under some occult influence; and under a premonition that something was

* Not very long ago there was a case of this kind, not far from Palghat, and not only was the fœtus removed but a wisp of straw was substituted in its place; apparently with an idea that, if the space were filled up somehow, the wretched woman would not die!

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754 going to happen he slept across the doorway, so that she could not without waking him leave the house. The door was closed and fastened, he sleeping *inside*. In the early hours of the morning he awoke, and, fearing something unpleasant had taken place as the door was open, he called his brother who was sleeping upstairs. Together they searched for the woman, and found her lying outside in the yard, unconscious. When she recovered her senses, she said that for some nights previous she felt as if she was being called outside, and she tried hard to resist the impulse to go out of the house into the night. At last she could resist no longer and, altogether against her will, unfastened the door and went out. What happened then she knew not. There was neither removal of a fœtus nor death in this case. Such is the story. It is quite possible that stories of the kind are inculcated by wary husbands to keep the women indoors and prevent their being crowned with horns. At any rate the story is one of the kind such as every Nâyar [364] believes. It is, I may say, quite plainly to be seen that, when the Nâyar constructs his house, he takes care that there are certain conveniences, so that the women need never leave the house at night. My narrator was a native gentleman in a position of authority, living at the scene of this strange story when the events related in it occurred not long ago. The persons were named, but I did not question them, as there is much objection to speak of such things to a stranger.

754 *The Ôḍi cult.*—The Parayan adepts in the magic Ôḍi
795 cult are to some extent hereditary functionaries.* They
564 form one of those hierarchies, common enough in this country, of which Europeans know so little; of which the people themselves know but little as nothing connected with them or with their system is written. It is custom pure and simple—custom which is the most difficult of all to approach and define within accuracy. We will put down what is known, in the way of popular belief of course, as may be free from error.

Those who belong to it, born into it so to speak, go through a certain novitiate, not easy; but those who wish to join it from outside the fraternity of the cult are required to *prove* themselves worthy to join it; and it is their trials as novices, terrifying and utterly filthy, which

* For much of this which follows I am indebted to Mr. U. Balakrishna Nâyar, who has kindly obtained for me matter which is in a general way, unobtainable to the European.

are truly difficult. Members of the brotherhood are bound to secrecy by solemn oaths, and the secrets of their craft are not allowed lightly to pass to any outsider. A member of the brotherhood may have one or more disciples or apprentices who are in the first place bound to strict obedience. These apprentices fill vacancies in the brotherhood.

He who would be a member of the Ôḍi cult falls at the feet of him whom he would have as master, and begs for initiation into the mysteries. The master tries to dissuade him, but the would-be Ôḍiyan persists; and then, when assent is given, comes the trial. He follows his master to a lonely place by night. The master disappears in mist, and then re-appears as some terrible beast, now standing still, now rushing furiously towards the novice as if to tear him in pieces. If he stands still and unperturbed the novice is considered to have fulfilled *that* test. He is then required to pass the night alone in the forest, which he is made to believe is peopled with strange beings howling horribly. When he has satisfied the master that he is not afraid, he is subjected to other tests, and he is eventually accepted as a novice. He is introduced formally to the brotherhood on a certain selected day, when, having invited them to a feast, pûja is made to the dread spirit worshipped by them—Nîli of Kallaḍikôd or Kallaḍikôd Nîli, as she is called (Kallaḍikôd is the *place* name), through whose aid the Ôḍiyan works his devilment. Flesh and liquor are consumed, and the novice is taught how to procure the magical *Pilla thilum* (infant oil).

The principal ingredient to be used in preparing this is a fœtus of some 6 or 7 months' growth. The Ôḍiyan fixes his eye on some woman, who may be of any caste other than his own, in her first pregnancy. Then, on a selected day, usually a Friday, he proceeds to her house at midnight, provided, that is, he meets with no inauspicious omen on the way. I am not sure what omens are auspicious or the contrary; but at any rate the Ôḍiyan returns home should he meet with an omen which is unfavourable, and starts out again some other night. Transforming himself into a dog, a bullock, a cat or some other quadruped, he walks thrice round the house, shaking vigorously a cocoanut-shell containing *gurusi*, a compound of turmeric water, lime and other substances, the colour of which is red. The woman whose appearance is desired comes out. She cannot help herself. If locked in she bangs her head against the wall, and yells

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795 until she is allowed to go out. Once out, she rushes like
564 a mad thing into the arms of the Ôḍiyan. He takes her by the hand and leads her to the courtyard or outside it. At once she is stripped naked. The choru kindi (blood —vessel: the shell) being placed near it, the womb expands, and the fœtus is easily removed in a moment.
824 A few leaves of the mailôsika plant (Polycarpæa spadicea*) are placed as was the other instrument of magic, and the womb contracts to the normal dimensions.

No wonder the Ôḍiyan is feared. By means of this *pilla thilum* he may render himself invisible; in fact he is able to do anything, according to popular belief.

SPIRITS, EVIL AND BENEFICENT, HOW SUBDUED.†

776
789 A regular working magician tells us something more of these. The most important of the evil spirits (Dûr murti) are—

Karinkutti.	Bhâiravan.
Kuttichchâttan (we have met him before).	Vanni bhâiravan.
Mâranakutti.	Chotâla bhadra kâli.
Kallâti mûttam.	Dûmapati.
Parakkutti.	Narasihmamûrti.
Ôḍikkutti.	Kâla bhâiravan.
Kuttu bhâiravan.	Ôḍi bhâiravan.

Nearly every man, woman and child in Malabar wears some protective charm against evil spirits. Such charms are also very commonly tied round the necks of cattle, goats and even dogs.

Here follows the recipe for subjection of the spirit Karinkutti into one's service. Of course each spirit is treated always in a totally different way. First you bury a dead black or reddish buffalo. You must not catch your buffalo and kill him. You must find him dead. If you say this is far from easy, I can only remark that the subjection of an evil spirit is not an easy matter. Having buried your buffalo—assuming for the moment that you are a magician, such as the instructions are intended for—you bathe, and while your cloths are wet and clinging to your body, draw the figure chakram, which corresponds to a magic circle, on the ground over the buried buffalo. The

* I am not sure that the correct name is here given for this plant. It may be Alpinia Allughas, the aromatic rhizomes of which are used by natives medicinally.

† For this note, too, I thank Mr. Balakrishna Nâyar.

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ground is then plastered over with cowdung. Then you mark out with rice flour an eight-cornered chakram, in the centre of which you place a small piece of cadjan leaf, and you place a similar piece at four corners. You sit with your back to the chakram, facing eastwards in the morning and westwards in the evening while performing pûja. This pûja is, I think, addressed to Karinkutti: not in any way to the sun God who is not then visible. For the pûja you must be supplied with fried grain, beaten rice, rice bran, a fowl, toddy, arrack, some flowers of three colours—one of them the tulsi *(Ocimum sanctum)* —sandalwood-paste, camphor, incense. (Note the use of the sacred tulsi in this diabolical incantation!) While the pûja, which I am unfortunately unable to describe (leaving my directions rather lame) is being performed the mûla mantram of Karinkutti is to be repeated 101 times.

In order to do all this you must bathe 7½ nazhikas (about 2¾ hours) before dawn, and complete the pûja before dawn arrives. But even before this you must stand up to your chest in water and repeat the mûla mantram 101 times. And you must repeat the whole thing *da capo* in the evening. The mantram is thus repeated 404 times in the day. You are not done yet, in fact this is only the beginning. The whole thing is done every day for 21 consecutive days; and then you will have the evil spirit Karinkutti entirely at your disposal. The person who remains continent, eats but once a day, cooking his own food, may it is said bring the spirit into obedience in less than 21 days.

Subjection of Vanni Bhâiravan is a much more difficult matter, involving much more elaborate ceremonial, details of which may well be spared the reader as the example which has been given is quite adequate.

And the good spirits—

Bhagavati.	Mûkâmi.
Bbadra kâli.	Vîrabhadran.
Hanumân.	Móhini.
Ganapati.	Sarabha Mûrti.
Subrahmanyan.	

The evil and the good spirits are truly a strange collection of beings! Their names help to illustrate what has been said already, that the Hinduism of the west coast is a strange medley of the higher Hinduism with the lower cult of the country. Bhâirava or Kâla Bhâirava (Bhâiravan of the Telugu country) is elsewhere the object of adoration of what is almost a distinct cult, a kind of

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771 795 776 mixture of Hinduism with Buddhism,—the kâpâlika religion or cult, the novice in which is "taught how to worship Bhaîri dêvam (Kâla Bhâirava) with human blood, by human sacrifice, by drinking liquor from a Brâhman's skull, and by wearing wooden earrings called Kâmâkshi kundala, symbols of the female principle." * The licentious portion of the programme I will leave out, as we can but glance at the Bhâiravan of other parts of Southern India. There, Bhâirava, or by whatever equivalent he may be called, is a male entity; in Malabar, where sex in deities is not of very much moment, Bhâirava is female. Bhadra Kâli, and even Vishnu under another name, is dragged into the category of evil spirits!

776 The first five of the good spirits are of course, well known. It is odd to find the terrible Bhadra Kâli bracketed with the genial Ganapati and reckoned as a good spirit. Some of the others are local spirits though rated along with emanations of Hinduism.

789 A point to be noticed here is that the magic which has been described is of that kind which is intimately connected with religion, in that the aid of spiritual beings is sought, and mischief is wrought by their means.

But there is, of course, another side of magic; the sympathetic, which deals in symbolic hurts and cures; of quite another character, being nothing more than a "misdevelopment of natural philosophy."

These divisions of magic, though tolerably distinct, are not therefore always separated. They are sometimes blended.

212 789 It was my good fortune, not very long ago, to acquire possession of a couple of grandhas, or palm leaf books, the subject of which is ordinary magic and black magic. Like all works of the kind (these are in the Malayalam character) they are written in such a manner as to be quite unintelligible to the ordinary reader. Letters, symbols, syllables belonging to no known word are employed to express occult meaning. In fact it is more a memorandum than anything else. One of the grandhas is so obscure that translation of it is next to hopeless, for the few who can do so are altogether unwilling to help one to decipher it. The other is composed of Sanscrit and Malayalam words, spelled abominably; but though relatively clear for a book out of a "Mantravâdis" (Warlock's Magicians) library, it, too, contains many blank spaces which can only be filled up by the professional dealer in

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* From an article by the writer in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. I, No. 7, 1889.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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773 778 825 [776] thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia, among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

778 771 825 [782] [753] [776]

793 795 778 825 [782] The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel. The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy. The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

[564] [841] [783] [787] 771 778 825 841 [782] [532]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

of the Brahmins. There are something like sixty four subdivisions of these people, from those ranking highest, in north Malabar, to the non-military, low caste ones of the south and of the Palghat taluk. Because of their very close relation to the Nambudri Brahmins which I shall describe below in detail, it can hardly be said that the Nayars are equal in caste to Sudras elsewhere in India. This is no doubt the reason for which, not only is their true position in the Hindu caste scale generally overlooked, but also why they themselves have a proud and self-assured bearing quite unlike that of the fourth and lowest caste in other parts of the country.

With the Nayars, the end of the list of caste Hindus is reached. Below come the *outcastes* who, despite their condition, are also graded in accordance with rank. First of these are the Tiyas. These bear different names in the various parts of Kerala, but there seems to be general agreement that they are really all one and the same people. Thus the name Tiya seems reserved for them in north Malabar with the exception perhaps of former north Cochin (Thiyyas); in Palghat, they are known as Iruvans, in south Malabar as Thandans and some as Irava-Panikkars; in south Cochin and north Travancore as Chovans, while in the rest of Travancore they go by the generic name of Iravas (sometimes spelt Izhuvas).

Next are the artisans or Kammalans of which there are properly only four main subdivisions. Their associates, also artisans and craftsmen, are roughly grouped into fourteen different communities.

The Kammalans are followed by another category composed of farm-hands, the Cherumas and Pulayas, and a dozen or so different kinds of aboriginals, jungle and hill folk who are rarely encountered on the coast or in the cultivated area, and have to be sought for in the foothills and jungles of the Western Ghats.

Non-Hindu inhabitants of Kerala include Moslems and Christians, of whom the greater number belong to the first of these two religious communities. They are both known locally as Mappillas, the first as Jonaka Mappillas and the others as Nasrani Mappillas. It is from this name, meaning "mother's son" or "bridegroom" or again "great child", that the more familiar *Mopla* for the Kerala Mohammedans has been coined. All are of the Sunni persuasion, while the Christians belong to a great number of varied denominations; some of them are Roman Catholic (the majority), others "Romo-Syrian" (Uniat), Orthodox Syrian, Malankara Syrian, Assyro-Chaldean (Nestorian), Mar Thomas, and of the Protestant United Church of south India.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 563 [795] There is a small community of Jews in Cochin, divided into White, Brown, and Black, the last named being the most numerous. Other Kerala residents are foreigners such as Canarese, Tamils, Arabs, and Europeans.

105 564 783 Untouchability has been made a penal offence by the present Indian Constitution and there is undoubtedly a tendency among the more enlightened in the country to combat its evils and attempt to eradicate it from modern Hindu society. On the other hand, the religious minded (and there are many) maintain that since the Constitution is a secular one and allows full freedom of religious belief and practice, the legislator cannot interfere in questions of caste and untouchability, as these have to do with the religious law and structure of India. The fact is that, today, untouchability is not what it was, but it cannot be said either that it has been done away with altogether. A visitor to Kerala is certainly immediately made aware of this, as many traditional views on what constitutes intercaste pollution and what does not are still very much in evidence. Thus, although a member of the artisan caste, a [784] [264] Kammalan, perhaps no longer pollutes those above him in the hierarchy, atmospherically, at twenty four feet as he used to do, it is nevertheless unthinkable that he should sit down to a meal of cooked rice with a [463] [484] [784] Nambudri, or even for that matter with a Nayar. The aboriginal Nayadis who still live off begging and hunting may possibly "come into town" now and not have to keep off the roads for fear of polluting other castes merely by being seen within a distance of seventy four feet, but they are not for that admitted to a would-be reformed Indian community in which no distinctions of caste creed and colour are made any longer; in fact, they themselves, probably out of some sort of perverse attachment to their powers of polluting, refuse to be rehabilitated – as has been attempted by the former government of Travancore – and prefer to carry on with their traditional way of life.

It can thus be safely said that polution of the higher castes by the lower is very much believed in and guarded against, even in Kerala [841] [846] today. Menstruating women, and also those who have given birth, are still considered to be unclean for a period, varying with the people to whom they belong. And the various kin groups, of which every individual is a member among the Hindus of Kerala, will equally be con- [614] [846] [765] sidered unclean and polluting for a certain amount of days – diminishing in number in inverse proportion to the height of the caste – after a birth or a death has taken place.

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
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opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman caste, styled Kūli Muttatta Arayan, has the privilege of being the first to begin the work of polluting the Bhoot or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary to enter. Cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water, he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nāyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tiyars and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years.' It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans opens the festival by solemnly making a fæcal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling."

Of the cock festival at Cranganore, the following account is given by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar* in his interesting little book on Malabar and its folk. "In the midst of its native charms is situated a temple dedicated to Kali, the goddess who presides over the infectious diseases, cholera and small-pox. She is a virgin goddess, whom no quantity of blood will satisfy. The temple is an old-fashioned one, presenting no striking architectural peculiarities. The priestly classes attached to it are not, as usual, Brāhmins, but a peculiar sect called Adigals, of whom there are but three families in the whole of Malabar. The Brāhmins are purposely excluded from participation in the poojah ceremonies,

* Malabar and its Folk, Madras, 1900.